

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION

SENATE/HOUSE BIPARTISAN CONFERENCE

REPORT FILED

Includes AMBER Alert, PROTECT Act, and Measures to Hunt and Punish Those Who Commit Crimes Against Children

Washington – Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today issued the following statement after the Conference Agreement to S. 151, “Prosecutorial Remedies and Other Tools to End the Exploitation of Children Today Act of 2003,” was filed.

“The Conferees of both the House of Representatives and the Senate have reached an agreement on S. 151, the landmark legislation designed to protect our children from victimization. This comprehensive bill will toughen the laws against child pornography, child abuse and child victimization, and extend the AMBER Alert system across our nation. As the author of both the PROTECT Act and the Comprehensive Child Protection Act of 2003, as well as an original cosponsor of the AMBER Alert bill -- all which are included in the agreement -- I am acutely aware of the magnitude of the problem facing our children and the need for legislative reform.

“The recent wave of child abductions across our nation, including the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart in my own home state of Utah, has highlighted the need for legislation to enhance our ability to protect our nation’s children against predators of all types. Ed Smart, Elizabeth’s father has stated:

“I want to thank the members of Congress, especially the Conferees, for taking up this important legislation and urge the House of Representatives and the Senate to pass the agreement so it may go to the President to be signed into law. So many families around the country may be saved from the pain and sorrow of loosing a child if we are able to get information to the public immediately after a child is kidnapped, like the AMBER Alert will do.”

“Also included in this legislation is the Code Adam Act which would require federal buildings to establish procedures for locating a child that is missing in the building. The provision is named after the son of John Walsh, the host of America’s Most Wanted and the John Walsh Show. His son, Adam, was kidnapped from a mall in Florida and murdered in 1981. Retail stores around the country, including Wal-Mart, have initiated Code Adam systems in the memory of Adam and they have successfully recovered many missing children.

"This incredible bill may be one of the most important pieces of child protection legislation passed in the last 20 years. I commend Senator Hatch's leadership on the Senate Judiciary Committee and Chairman Sensenbrenner's leadership on the House Judiciary Committee. Pushing this truly bipartisan legislation through is very appropriate during 'National Crime Victims' Rights week. This bill, which is a loud voice for the smallest victims of crime-children, has sent a loud message to those who would pray upon our most vulnerable segment of society," says John Walsh.

“I want to commend and thank my colleagues in the House of Representatives, especially Chairman Sensenbrenner, and my colleagues here in the Senate for reaching a quick agreement on this critical legislation. The Conferees and our staff have worked tirelessly to bring this measure to a close and reach a bi-partisan agreement. I urge my colleagues to continue in this fashion and pass the Conference Agreement to S. 151. There is no reason for the Senate to delay sending this bill to the President before we recess. Quite frankly, our nation’s children deserve no less.”